

"dr. daedalus" by lauren slater essay sample

[Religion](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Dr. Daedalus” by Lauren Slater Essay Sample

There are humans in the world that strive to become more animal like.

Whether they just act like ones, or have surgical operations to look more like one, they try to become more like an animal. In her essay, “ Dr. Daedalus,”

Lauren Slater suggests that by altering our physical selves to emulate something more animal, our brains, and possibly even our souls, we become somehow more animal as well. She feels that we transform, and become more animal like every time we alter our body into the form of an animal.

Slater is correct to point out that when we change our self to look more like animals we might have more in physical features in common with them, but she fails to look at how our identities do not change. We look different, but we are as much human after these procedures as we were before. What makes us unique, and different from any other species, is the ability to imitate. Imitation is a quality made available to us through the meme, a theory clearly pointed out by Susan Blackmore in her book *The Meme Machine*.

A meme is defined as a unit of cultural information, such as a cultural practice or idea, that is transmitted verbally or by repeated action from one mind to another. We humans have the ability to use it, and we use it very frequently. Religions, fashion, and even jingles are all memes we use everyday. Blackmore believes that what makes us unique from animals is not our intelligence, consciousness, or soul; it's our ability to imitate and pass something on, the meme. Therefore, when we change our body to look more like an animal, our ability to imitate is lost nor affected. Slater is wrong when she thinks that we become more animal like when we change

<https://assignbuster.com/dr-daedalus-by-lauren-slater-essay-sample/>

ourselves to become more animal like, because what makes us unique is our ability to imitate.

When we emulate ourselves as animals we do not become more animal like, but instead we enforce ourselves as unique humans, because our ability of emulation is just a function of the meme. When we emulate, we show off and apply our ability to imitate. We can stop at any time acting like an animal at any time with our freewill, because there is nothing there to stop us mentally from acting like humans again. Our ability to act and look like animals is just an extension of the meme, and we will always be our unique human selves.

The core of what makes us unique and different from animals is our ability to pass something on, the meme. Blackmore considers what makes us humans unique, different from animals and explains that only once we know how we are different from animals, can we better understand if we are becoming more like them. The first of the three points that Blackmore considers is intelligence. She feels that "the notion of intelligence is extremely slippery, with interminable arguments about how to define it, how to measure it and to what extent it is inherited" (22). Her perception is that we cannot judge something by an idea that we do not fully understand. It's hard to determine intelligence, and experts don't have any adequate methods to measure it precisely yet. She next attacks the idea that it is consciousness that makes us different from animals. Although all humans have a consciousness, Blackmore doesn't perceive it as an answer to our uniqueness.

Scientists cannot even define the term 'consciousness'. Everyone knows what their own consciousness is like but they cannot share that knowledge

with anyone else. This troublesome fact – the subjectivity of consciousness – may explain why for most of this century the whole topic of consciousness was more or less banned from scientific discussion (22).

Consciousness is subjective, and no philosopher or scientist can agree on how it works. Once again, we can not base an answer on something we can not understand. The last argument that Blackmore mentions is the soul, or the spirit. She doesn't talk about the religious soul, which too is a meme, but instead she talks about our core, the " little conscious ' me' inside our brain; a ' me' who sees the world, makes the decisions, directs the actions and has responsibility for them." (23). She straightforward states the assumption that we are different from animals because we have this core is wrong.

The reasoning is that we know that scientifically there is no center to the brain where everything happens and all of our thoughts join. Each part works on its own; there is no centralized part in the brain. We know enough about the brain for scientists to say that there is no core of the brain where we can find the little me resides. Keeping all this in mind, we can base the idea that when our bodies change, and we become more animal like, our mentality is affected too. We might think we more like a lizard if we scale our skin, therefore we would act more like a lizard. The problem is we " think" we're the lizard, but our brain doesn't become like a lizard's. We don't start thinking like a lizard. Most importantly, we don't lose our meme; the meme isn't even somewhat changed. We only show how versatile our power of meme is.

When we add a new part to our body, or change it in some form, our brain adapts to those changes. Lauren Slater bases her idea on that we change who we are when our brain adapts these new changes. She feels that when we get a procedure done on ourselves to look more like an animal; we are in fact going to become a little more like that animal. Slater quotes Joe Rosen in her essay, "if I were to attach a third thumb, your brain would map it, absolutely. Our bodies change our brains and our brains are infinitely moldable" (293). Rosen emphasizes that our brains are affected when we change ourselves, and that our brain is so versatile we can change in a lot of ways. Slater is correct to follow Rosen's idea that our brain changes if we were to gain or lose a limb, but this change does not make us less humans. Slater shouldn't agree with Rosen's next step up that "the body is a conduit for the soul, at least historically speaking. When you change what you look like, you change who you are" (281). We don't change who we are when we change our looks.

When someone puts on makeup, they are still the same person. If you were to get wings, you would still be the same person, and even if you have full body surgery, you would still be the same. Your personality would not change, your attitude would not change, and most importantly, you would still keep your mind. Others would view you as more animal-like from your new features, but you wouldn't really be any more animal-like. Therefore, our brains might change, and we would know that others would see us to be more animal-like, but we do not become more animal-like other than the looks. The change our brain would undergo would be very insignificant, and we would not feel that change in our minds.

Slater, with the influence from Rosen, points out that there is nothing deep to us, we are readily taking on varied shapes, forms, or meanings which makes us protean. " Our protean abilities clearly have their upsides ... but the downside is, there is no psychic stability, no substantive self, nothing really meaty and authentic. We sense this about ourselves. We know we are superficial, all breadth and no depth" (290). The idea of us being protein directly implies that there is nothing deep to us, so the only thing we can change about ourselves is our physical self. This also goes along with Blackmore's suggestion that we are merely vehicles that pass memes on from one to another, and thus, or in that sense, protean. " We humans," Blackmore argues, " because of our powers of imitation, have become just the physical ' hosts' needed for the memes to get around" (27).

It might seem that Blackmore's vehicle idea might imply that there is nothing deep to us, confirming Slater's suggestion that we are simply protein and there is nothing more to us. Being vehicles for meme's does make us something deep, it's because being vehicles is unique, no other animals are vehicles and they don't carry memes. When we carry memes, whether it's a religion or a fashion, you can actually hear it or see it on us. Animals always act like who they are, but we have the will to look at someone or something and imitate it with our freewill. Being protein is one of our features, what in since makes us different from animals. We can change ourselves to be like an animal, but the next week we can change ourselves to be like human again, because our flexibility and protein.

People can change themselves to look more like humans. They can have intricate operations which will make them think they are more like an animal,
<https://assignbuster.com/dr-daedalus-by-lauren-slater-essay-sample/>

but such operations do not make anyone any less human. Our ability to imitate others, the meme, is what makes us unique human beings. Animals can not imitate us or others, and they can not pass something on from one to another, except for their genes of course. Slater's idea that we become more animal like when we change our self is erroneous, because all we do is acquire the physical features of animal, but we do not lose our meme and start thinking differently. No procedure can take our meme away from us; therefore we can't become any less human and more animal like. When we do try to become more animal like and act as ones, it's only our meme's kicking in and imitating animals.